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S E R M O N

PREACH'D ON THE

F A S T - D A Y,

November 10, 1742.

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W A R E in H E R T F O R D S H I R E.

BY THE

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Corrected and Improved.

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Whoever will take a Number of these Sermons to give away, shall have them at half Price; and if any well desposed Persons are willing to circulate them, but do not care for the Trouble of distributing them properly, they may leave their Contributions at the Bookseller's and they shall be faithfully applied. The universal Approbation that this Discourse has met with obliges me to think that it makes some Impression upon those who read it, and, consequently, might do some Good, if it were propagated. Wherefore, I presume, it will not be indecent in me if I propose it to the Consideration of my Brethren, whether it may not be worth their while to recommend the Encouragement of it.



N.B. The Dedication is omitted in this Edition only for the Sake of making room for some Additions to the Sermon.

H O S E A, viii. 3:

*Israel hath cast off the Thing that is
Good, the Enemy shall pursue him.*

BY *the Thing that is Good*, the Prophet means, the *true worship* of God; and, as a Punishment upon them for their Impiety in departing from it, he tells them that the *Enemy*, (meaning the *King of Assyria*) should pursue them and make a Prey of them.

The *Israelites* were the peculiar People of God, separated from the rest of the World by an express Covenant between God and them, wherein were mutual Stipulations. God, on his Part; promised to take them under his more immediate Protection, and to grant them all kinds of temporal Felicity. The People engaged to acknowledge him as the only true God, to worship him only, and to observe the Laws contained in the Covenant. But; together with the Promise of Blessings to their Obedience, there was annexed a most dreadful Denunciation of Vengeance in case of Idolatry and Disobedience. The History of this People is a Proof of God's Veracity; of the certain Performance of his Promises, and as certain an Execution of his Menaces. While they continued faithful, they were always protected and blessed; whenever they revolted, they were as constantly scourged; and at last, when the Measure of their Iniquities was full, when they were ripe for Vengeance, they were totally destroyed.

But God is not the God of the *Jews* only; but also of the *Gentiles*. He is the universal King of the whole World, to whom all Man-
B kind;

kind, by the immutable Law of Creation, owe Obedience; and as he is the Universal Governour, he will not fail to *manifest* his Dominion, and preserve the Honour of his Authority, by some publick Acts of his Power. As *rational* Creatures we are bound to the observance of such *moral* Precepts as are the result of our Natures. As Persons who live under the Light of an *external Revelation*, those Natural Laws are bound upon us by a *positive* Command, together with an Addition of particular Doctrines and Duties respecting the Nature and Worship of God: And, tho' the Sanctions of the *Christian* Covenant be principally *future* Rewards and Punishments, yet, from God's moral Attributes, from his own Declarations, and from the History of his Dispensations recorded in the Bible, we may reasonably infer that national Wickedness and a casting off of the *Christian* Doctrines and Worship will be punished, in this World as well as in the next, by some national Visitation, tho' not so constantly and regularly as under the *Jewish* Dispensation, which was guarded in a particular manner by *Temporal* Sanctions. Upon this Belief it is that we are called together by publick Authority, and I hope it is upon the same sincere Conviction, and not merely in compliance with a civil Injunction, that we are here assembled, in order to acknowledge the sinful State of this Nation and the Addition that we have made to the Stock of national Wickedness by our own personal Sins; to humble our selves before God for them; to implore his Pardon, and to deprecate those Judgments which we have great Reason to dread, because we so well deserve them; and to supplicate that Divine Assistance without which the greatest human Wisdom cannot promise its self any Success from its Counsels, and

and the greatest human Force may prove mere Weakness and Impotency.

That we may in some measure answer the pious Intension of this solemn meeting I shall

First, Observe to you, that publick Calamities are inflicted upon Communities by the Hand of God, either for their Correction and Reformation, or for their final Destruction.

Secondly, I shall inform you, from the Authority of God's own Word, for what *Sorts* of Wickedness He, in the constant Course of his Providence, has usually punished Nations with Temporal Calamities; in order

Thirdly, To enquire into the Condition of our own Country, that we may judge what Reason we have to apprehend that we shall feel the vindictive Hand of the Supreme Being for our many and crying Sins. After which, I shall

Fourthly, Offer you my Sentiments very honestly and plainly concerning our Duty in our several Stations for averting God's Indignation, or mitigating the Severity of it.

First, I must remind you, that publick Calamities are inflicted by the Hand of God, either for the Correction and Reformation, or for the final Destruction of a wicked People.

It is perfectly agreeable to our natural Conceptions of the Supreme Being to suppose, that He does concern himself in the Affairs of his Creatures; and we should entertain very unworthy Thoughts of his Attributes if we did not believe it. It was owing to a false and low Opinion of the Divine Nature that the *Epicureans* imagined God to be an inactive Being. For, had they considered how easy it is for

Omniscience to attend to all the Actions and Thoughts of all his Creatures at the same Time, and how easy it is for *Omnipotence* to rule and direct them all, they could not have judged a *Providence* to be any Interruption to the *Happiness* of God; And if they had conceived just Notions of the Divine *Goodness* they would not have thought it below his *Dignity*, but perfectly agreeable to his transcendent Excellency, to govern Beings to whom it was not below him to give Existence. And if God governs the World he will as certainly *discover* a Providence to his Creatures, as he has manifested himself to be the *Creator* of the World. And as he is a Being of Infinite Justice and Holiness, who cannot avoid having a natural Hatred of Vice, and Love of Virtue, he will countenance the one, and discountenance the other, in such a solemn and publick Manner, as may vindicate his Justice and Holiness in this World, as well as in the next. Tho' at the Day of Judgment only will be the final Retribution when every one shall receive his Reward or Punishment exactly proportionable to his Works; yet if he shews that he *does* interpose in the Government of us, He must shew that He is a *righteous* Governour, by giving *some* Testimonies of his Love of good Men, and his Dislike of wicked Men. Besides, as the Purity and Holiness of the Divine Nature must make God desirous that Holiness should be promoted among Men, and as *Afflictions* are a natural Means of correcting and reforming us, we may from thence conclude, that infinite Wisdom will not neglect to make use of Instruments so well adapted to the Purposes of Improvement. All this is perfectly agreeable to our natural Apprehensions of God.

But the Doctrine of a Providence, and of God's sending *Afflictions* upon *private* Persons and *publick*

ck *Communities*, these Points are established in the *Bible* beyond Contradiction, with all such as believe the Truth of it. Providence interposes much more particularly, as to *private* Persons, than most of us imagine, frequently making our Vices the Means of correcting and punishing each other, without destroying our *Free Agency*; and in the *Scriptures* are recorded many Instances of God's punishing particular Sins by being, *Himself*, the more immediate and open Executioner of his Vengeance *. But I am at present only concerned with *publick* Calamities. However, I must observe, that if God has so often visited, and does still visit *particular* Persons, either in Mercy to reclaim them, or in order to make them Examples of his Indignation, the Honour of his Authority and Laws seems to be much more concerned in the Chastisement and Punishment of *Societies* and *Communities*. And, accordingly, all the World have been of Opinion that God does punish Nations in their publick Capacity, and that National Calamities are the Effects of his special Providence; not by permitting Things to take their ordinary Course, but by directing them by an over-ruling Power; in consequence of which Opinion in Times of National Distress they have constantly had recourse to Sacrifices in order to appease the Divine Wrath.

But let us hear the Declarations of God Himself. The Prophet *Isaiab* says, Ch. xxiv. 1.
 “ Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty
 “ and

* I cannot help taking this Opportunity of recommending two Books upon Providence. The First is a Proof of a *particular* Providence from Scripture, in Answer to Mr. *Chub*, by Mr. *Jackson*. The other is the Great Dean *Sberlock's* Piece upon Providence; which, in my Judgment, is one of the best and noblest Books that ever was written by a mere Man, and worthy of any one's Perusal, let his Knowledge be ever so extensive.

“ and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside
 “ down, and scattereth abroad the Inhabitants
 “ of the Earth.” Again, Ch. xlv. 7. “ I make
 “ Peace and create Evil. I the Lord do all
 “ these Things.” To the same Purpose says
Amos, Ch. iii. 6. “ Shall there be Evil in a
 “ City and the Lord hath not done it?” And
 if from *general* Declarations, plain and full as
 Words can express them, we turn to all the
 Instances of national and publick Calamities re-
 corded in the Bible, They are expressly ascribed
 to the Interposal of Omnipotence. It was God
 that brought the *Flood* upon the World. It
 was God that rained down Fire and Brimstone
 from Heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and
 the Cities about them. It was God that inflict-
 ed so many Plagues upon *Egypt*; that over-
 threw *Pharaoh* and his Army in the *Red-Sea*;
 that destroyed so many Nations by the Hands
 of the *Israelites*. He says, that it was He who
 raised up so many Enemies to the *Jews*; who
 gave them up to the Sword; who sent them
 into Captivity; who visited them with Pesti-
 lence, with Famine, with Drought, and other
 such national Evils; which are in Scripture
 called God’s *Host*, and his *Army*. When the
 Prophets give us an Account of the Destruction
 of *Ninevy*, of *Babylon*, and other Cities, God
 Himself is said to be the Author of it. Various
 are the Ways by which God brings about these
 angry Purposes. He has all the Elements, all
 Nature at his Command, and without altering
 their Laws He can employ them in his Service.
 He has all the secret Inclinations and Affections
 of human Nature under his Inspection and
 Controul, and without altering the Man can
 alter his Purposes and direct his Passions; as we
 may turn the Course of a River without
 changing the Properties of the Water. He
 stirs

stirs up one ambitious Nation to punish another. He does not make that King, or People *ambitious*, but serves Himself upon their ambitious Inclinations, by directing where they shall operate, and facilitating their Success by an invisible Assistance ; so that all such Events are as properly produced by God, and are as much his doing, as if He did them without the Mediation of second Causes. This I apprehend to be the common Method by which God has governed the World. But sometimes he has interposed in a more absolute Way ; not by *directing*, but *over-ruling*, and *stopping* the ordinary Course of Second Causes, so as to hinder them from producing their natural Effects ; as well as acting without them : As also, with Regard to Men's Passions and Purposes, He has sometimes suggested Designs, and at other times forceably hindered Designs from being put in Execution. Only this one Observation must constantly be borne in Mind, that God never so far over-rules free Agency as to force any Man to have wicked Inclinations.

Secondly, Having shewn by undeniable Testimonies from *Scripture*, and by Arguments drawn from the *moral Attributes* of the divine Nature, that God has always visited, and will always visit wicked Nations with publick Calamities, either for their Reformation, or Destruction ; our next Enquiry must be into the Account which the Scriptures have given us of the *Sorts* of Sins for which He has visited Nations. I shall trace this Matter up to the first publick Vengeance that God took on Mankind by causing a general *Inundation* that swept away Man and Beast and every living thing that was upon the Earth, except those few which He preserved in the Ark. And we have this Account of the *Reason* why God took such a severe Course with the

the old World. “ And God saw that the
 “ *Wickedness* of Man was Great, and that eve-
 “ ry Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart
 “ was only *Evil* continually, and it repented the
 “ Lord that he had made Man.” From whence
 it appears, that a *General Corruption* of Mind
 and Manners was the *Occasion* of the Flood.

The same Reason is assigned for the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*. “ And the
 “ Lord said, because the Cry (meaning by
 “ That Expression that the Heinousness of
 “ their Sins called aloud for Vengeance) is
 “ very great, and because their Sin is very
 “ grievous, I will go down and enquire.” This
 Account agrees exactly with the former, in representing *Vice and Wickedness in general* as the Reason of their Destruction.

Pharaoh and his People were destroyed for their *Cruelties* to the Children of *Israel*; as *Babylon* afterwards met with the same Fate, for that Reason in particular, tho’ their other grievous Abominations conspired to make them fit Objects of God’s Wrath. The Guilt of the *Egyptians* was aggravated to a very high Degree by disputing the Sovereign Dominion of God, and refusing to let the *Israelites* go, notwithstanding the many miraculous Plagues which he wrought for their Conviction. Hitherto the Reasons of God’s Judgments are *General*, such Vices as all Nations may be equally guilty of, viz. *Infidelity, Rebellion* against God, as the Governor of the World, *cruel Oppression*, &c.

Exactly Correspondent to this Account is that which *Moses* gives of the Reasons of the final Destruction of those Nations which God destroyed by the *Israelites*; which Reasons Omniscience foresaw when he promised to give them Possession of those Countries. *Deut. ix. 4.*

“ Speak not thou in thine Heart after that the
 “ Lord

“ Lord thy God doth cast them out from before thee, saying, for *my* Righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this Land, but for the *Wickedness* of these Nations the Lord doth drive them out.”

The *Israelites*, though (as I have already observed) there was something *peculiar* in their Case on Account of their being in Covenant with God, yet they were punished for such Sins as had no Relation to their *particular Circumstances*, but for *general Vices* and *Immoralities*; not only for offending against God as the God of *Israel*, but as the God and Lord of the *whole World*. We must attend to the Relation which the Prophets have made of this Matter. Hear what *Isaiab* says on this Head. Ch. iii, 14. “ The Lord will enter Judgment with the Antients of the People, and the Princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the Vineyard, the Spoil of the Poor is in your Houses. What mean ye that ye beat my People to pieces, and grind the Faces of the Poor, saith the Lord God of Hosts? Moreover, the Lord saith, because the Daughters of *Zion* are haughty, and walk with stretched-out Necks, and wanton Eyes, walking and mincing as they go, therefore the Lord will smite with the Scab, &c.” Hear the same Prophet denouncing the Judgments of God in the fifth Chapter, against his Vineyard, the House of *Israel*. “ I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up Briars and Thorns; I will also command the Clouds, that they rain no Rain upon it. For the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of *Israel*, and the Men of *Judah* his pleasant Plant; and he looked for Judgment, but behold *Oppression*; for *Righteousness*, but behold a Cry. — Wo unto them that

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“ join

“ join House to House, that lay Field to Field,
 “ till there be no Place, that they may be
 “ placed alone in the midst of the Earth. —
 “ Wo unto them that rise up early in the Morn-
 “ ing that they may follow strong Drink, that
 “ continue until Night till Wine inflame them.
 “ Therefore my People are gone into Captivi-
 “ ty.” In the xxii. Ch. of *Ezek.* ver. 6, &c.
 we have a recital of the Sins for which God
 threatened to punish *Jerusalem*, viz. “ shed-
 “ ding of Blood, despising Parents, Oppression,
 “ vexing the Fatherless and Widow, despising
 “ Holy Things, and profaning Sabbaths, In-
 “ cest, Extortion, unjust Gain, Adultery, &c.”
 Much to the same Purpose is *Habbakuck's*
 Charge against *Chaldea*, Ch. ii. In another Place
 the scant Measure and the Bag of deceitful
 Weights are mentioned among other Vices
 that provoked God to punish them. If these
 Instances were not sufficient I could cite Pas-
 sages for every Immorality, but I shall instance
 in but one more, and that ought not to be
 omitted, because it is so severely stigmatized as
 a Vice the most odious to God, and the Cause
 of the Ruin of private Persons, and the Over-
 throw of Kingdoms. Says *Isaiah*, Ch. ii. 11,
 12. “ The lofty Looks of Man shall be hum-
 “ bled, and the Haughtiness of Man shall be
 “ brought down, and the Lord alone shall be
 “ exalted in that Day. For the Day of the
 “ Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that
 “ is lifted up, and he shall be brought low —
 “ v. 21. Wo unto them that are wise in their
 “ own Eyes, and prudent in their own Sight.
 “ xxiii. 9. The Lord of Hosts hath purposed
 “ it, to slain the Pride of all Glory, and to bring
 “ into Contempt all the Honourable of the
 “ Earth.” This is the constant Language of
 Scripture. In the 10th Ch. it is said, “ that
 “ God

“ God would send the King of *Assyria* to pu-
 “ nish the *Jews* for their *Hypocrisy*, and that
 “ after he should have performed the whole
 “ Work which God intended he would then
 “ punish the stout Heart of that proud Prince
 “ and the Glory of his high Looks, for say-
 “ ing, that he did it by the Strength of his
 “ own Hand, and by his own Wisdom.”

Since we see the Method of God's dealing with sinful Nations, and for *what* Vices they have been chastised and punished, it concerns us to look narrowly into our selves and see what Resemblance there is between *us* and those People who have felt the Rod of Affliction, that we may prevent the like Fate by a timely Repentance. This is a Part of my Discourse which cannot be more offensive to others than it is disagreeable to my self; but *probing*, tho' it gives Pain to the tender *Operator*, as well as to the *Patient*, is absolutely necessary to a thorough Cure.

Thirdly, But where shall I begin to draw the Comparison? Or where shall I find room for so large a Description at the End of a Discourse?— If I could follow the *Whoremonger* into his dark Recesses, what Scenes of Lewdness and Obscenity should I discover! Were I capable of seeing all the secret and indirect Methods that are made use of in the way of *Trade* and *Business*, I am afraid they would *equal*, at least, the *scant Measure* and *deceitful Weights* which the *Prophets* complained of in *their* Times. Were we to examine the common Intercourse of Men in the way of *Acquaintance*, and *Friendship*, we should find Numbers of them as deceitful in their Professions of Esteem, as they are fraudulent and tricking in their Transactions; professing the highest Opinion and the kind-
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est Intentions while they have the greatest Indifferency, if not a Dislike towards those whom they care for, and, perhaps, are privately doing them ill Offices.

But why should I waste your Time in *imagining* what passes in *secret*, where no Eye, but that of Omniscience, can penetrate, when our open Streets, our publick Places, and Highways will afford so much Matter of melancholly Complaint. Is it possible to stir out without having our Ears grated with Oaths and Curses? Those Names which claim our most awful and affectionate Veneration prostituted to the lowest and most impertinent Uses in Conversation, or still more infamously abused in wishing Damnation to themselves and others? The Profanation of the Sabbath the Scriptures every where represent as a Sin very provoking to God; and the *Christian* Sabbath, though it be not to be observed in the same Manner with the *Jewish*, yet, as it is dedicated to *Christian* Worship and other Religious Uses, the Profanation of it must be altogether as criminal. And how shamefully is it profaned among us, not only by neglecting the publick Worship on that Day, not only by neglecting to employ some part of it, at least, at Home in reading and meditating, but by taking unnecessary Journeys and following secular Occupations, and that openly too, without Molestation; while others privately misemploy it in their own Houses? *Publick* Inns make no scruple of keeping their Doors open, and entertaining Company in Time of Divine Service; and, though the Law requires it, no body will offer to visit them. In some of these Houses of Entertainment there is such Rioting as to be a Nuisance to their Neighbours, and yet no body will attempt to get them suppressed, or regulated. Backbiting,
and

and flandering and every kind of uncharitable Censure are as frequent as if Humanity were no part of the Law of Nature, nor brotherly Love any part of Christianity. Tale-bearing is so general, that many make it their Employment; and there is so little Regard to Truth, that you seldom can depend upon any Thing that you hear. It is not a very agreeable Picture that I have drawn, but it is a strong Likeness; and, I fear, most other Towns in the Kingdom, as well as this, might have sat for it.

But let us rise from our low and obscure Situation, and remove the Enquiry into the Conduct of Persons in higher Life. To use the Prophet *Jeremy's* Words, *Surely these are poor, they are foolish, for they know not the Way of the Lord, nor the Judgments of their God. I will get me unto the GREAT Men and speak unto them.* The others are illiterate and ignorant, but these by the Advantages of their Education have had better Opportunities of knowing their Duty, and by reason of the great Blessings afforded them are under greater Obligations to perform it; *but these also have broken the Yoke and burst the Bonds.* Many of them, far from making suitable Improvements of their Advantages, and grateful Returns to Providence, have abused them to the Purposes of Vice. Instead of being Examples to those who would be influenced by them, they are Patterns of Impiety and Irreligion. They not only live without God in the World, but deny his Being and Providence. They not only neglect all private and publick Prayer, a necessary Acknowledgment of our Dependance on our Creator, but make a Jest of the Duty. The *Sabbath* (as is too well known, those Enormities being now made no great Secret of) is spent at Gaming Tables at their own Houses, or more publicly profaned
by

by traveling on that Day, without the least pretence of Necessity, but in utter Contempt of the Constitution of our Country. This Impiety is become so common, about *London* in particular, that our Roads are as full of Carriages and Horses on a *Sunday* as on any other Day. And no wonder that Trades-people, some out of an Ambition to imitate the Quality and Gentry, others out of Conveniency should run into the Practice. *They* cannot give themselves any other Day of Pleasure without some *Temporal* Loss; and as they cannot put *Spiritual* Advantages into their Pocket and carry them to Market, it is natural for them to prefer what they can *feel* and *see* and *negotiate* to invisible, tho' infinitely superior Blessings. Luxury and Voluptuousness are become the Business of the Fashionable and Polite; and, as the necessary Consequence of these expensive Vices, because the necessary Means of supporting them; a general *Corruption* has spread itself thro' the Land, to the Subversion of all Principle and the publick Good. When the Lust of Ambition, or an intemperate Appetite towards Grandeur, or Pleasure rages, it soon eats out all Sense of Duty, all Regard to the Community, to their Friends, or Relations; and every generous Consideration must be sacrificed to their narrow Attachment to their Scheme of *present* Enjoyment. And, to keep one another in Countenance, they industriously labour to make People believe that *Corruption* is become a necessary Expedient of Government. I wonder not at all that shameless Prostitutes should have the Assurance to advance any thing that will serve their Ends; but I have been, even in this Age, a little surpris'd to hear Persons of some Character and some Understanding turn Advocates for so wicked and so weak a Maxim; a
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Scheme of Government that must in a little time defeat its own End. But, what is at present my more immediate Concern to take notice of, such Vices not only tend, in their natural Consequences, to the Destruction of their Country, but God, as sure as there is one, will visit a Nation that is guilty of them.

But there is another Sort of *Covetousness*, or *worldly Mindedness* that is become as *Epidemical* as that above-mentioned; and that, too, among Persons of Character for moral Virtue. And, yet, there is hardly any Vice more opprobriously treated, or more severely threatened with temporal as well as eternal Punishment. And there is very good Reason for it, because it takes Possession of the Heart and Affections, and draws them off from the Love and Service of God, For which Reason the Scripture calls it *Idolatry*, a *worshipping* and *serving* the *Creature* more than the *Creator*, or at least *besides* him. *Worshipping* any Thing is, *Esteeming*, *Loving*, *Serving*, and *Confiding* in it as our principal Happiness and Support. If they set up this *Idol* in their Heart, as the constant Object of their *Thoughts*, *Wishes* and *Trust*, this is robbing God of that *Honour* and *Love* and *Service* which he claims as our supreme Lord and supreme Good. Men of this Turn, whatever Principles they may *habitually* entertain, in *Speculation*, will, *occasionally*, act in Opposition to them in favour of their darling Scheme of acquiring *Riches*. Tho' these Men are not more criminal in the Sight of *God* than those who desire *Wealth* in order to consume it upon their Lusts, or to support their Grandeur, yet they act more absurdly and foolishly. The *Sensualist* and the *Ambitious* propose some reasonable End to themselves in getting *Riches*, for they do it that they may have the Means of gratify,

gratifying a Passion that has some real Foundation in their Nature, whereas the *Muckworm*, who so assiduously pursues his worldly Schemes, only that he may get possession of so much more Money, and leave so much more behind him, can receive no other Pleasure from such Acquisitions than what consists in satisfying an unnatural Appetite that is perpetually torturing him. A Man that has a continual Thirst upon him gratifies his Palate while he is drinking, but that Pleasure will not compensate for the constant uneasiness of *Craving*. But I am not so much concerned in the *Folly*, as in the *Wickedness* of this Vice. If they could thus gravely play the Fool without hurting others I would be contented to leave them to the Enjoyment of their childish Amusements, but they are injurious to *Society*, as well as to their own *Souls*, in that they will often be wanting in their Duty to their *Neighbour* and the *Publick*, and by encreasing our *National Wickedness* help to bring down the Anger of Heaven upon us, and obstruct the Success of our Designs for the publick Good. For can we expect that God will go out with our *Fleets and Armies* unless we look upon him as our best Friend and Benefactor, and render ourselves worthy of his Protection by esteeming and loving and serving him above all things.

I must observe farther upon this Head, that those who have no Prospect of accumulating *Wealth*, may be *worldly-minded*. Their *Hearts* and *Affections* may be equally engaged in the pursuit of the *Comforts*, or *Necessaries* of Life, as if they aimed at the greatest *Opulency*; and such a degree of *Anxiety* and *Sollicitude* is equally inconsistent with the *Love* and *Service* of God. And this sort of *Worldly-mindedness* shews its self in the lowest *Tradesman*, in the *Farmer*, in the *Artificer*, and the *Day-Labourer*.

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There is another Vice (and that, too, of so very offensive a Nature, that God is said *to set his Face against it*) more epidemical than any other; a most intemperate Opinion of our own Worth and Excellency, which naturally produces, on one hand great Want of *Decorum* towards our *Betters*, and on the other the greatest Disdain and Insolence towards *Inferiors*. The former are impatient under a State of *Dependency* and *Subordination*; the latter are so jealous of the most distant Approaches towards a *Rivalship* that they will hardly allow those below them to be of the same Order of Beings. The one, instead of that Protection and Support which are the End of such Distinctions in Civil Life, make use of them only as Instruments of Oppression and Tyranny, or as the Means of gratifying their ostentatious Vanity. The other from the same Principle, tho' with a worse Grace, refuse to pay that external Respect without which no Distinction, consequently, no Order can be preserved in Society. If we turn our Eyes towards the Devastations that have laid waste Kingdoms, or that now rage in many Parts of *Europe*, the effusion of Blood, the Ruin of Millions, all the dreadful havock that War makes in a Country; whence originally comes all this Misery? Comes it not hence? From *Ambition*, which is the genuine Offspring of *Pride*? From the same Fountain flow most of the *Heresies* and *Schisms* that have disturbed the Peace and broken the Unity of the *Christian Church*. If we descend to the Broils in a Neighbourhood, or the more private Quarrels in Families, among Friends and Acquaintance, they are generally occasion'd by Contests for *Superiority*, or *Precedency*; by imagined *Affronts*, and the omission of such Instances of *personal Respect* as Men's high Opinion of their own Merit challenges as their just De-

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mands;

mands; and as almost every one over-rates himself, it is impossible but that this must occasion Differences and Heats amongst them. And can we wonder that God should declare himself an open Enemy to a Vice that is such an Enemy to Mankind, in all the various Stations and Circumstances of Life? So derogatory to *his* Honour, who placed us all in our several Posts that we might contribute our Share towards the general Good, and promote the Happiness of each other? So unbecoming Creatures wholly dependent for their very Being and Subsistence, and accompanied with such Imperfections and Vices as are just matter of Humiliation and Shame? So much upon a level with one another, as to all the essential Perfections and Advantages of human Nature, that there is very little room for Triumph or Boasting: All made out of the same Mass of Clay, in the same Shape, with the same Faculties of Mind and Powers of Body: all in the Image of God, and equally capable of higher Degrees of Participation of it here: All equally Heirs of Eternal Glory and Happiness hereafter, when such little Distinctions as arise from our external Circumstances shall cease, and no other Difference be made between the *Emperor* and the *Beggar*, but what relates to their *Piety* and *Virtue*. It is a beautiful Observation of the Son of *Syrach*, as beautifully expressed, that *Pride was not made for Man*. And, yet, all Men are proud. Strange! Nothing but Experience could convince us of the Universality of this unnatural Disease of the Mind, or of the possibility of its growing out of Causes, seemingly so incapable of producing it; a *Title*, a *Pedigree*, *Dirty Acres*, or *Dirt* in other Forms, made harder and more shining; all of them quite foreign to our Nature, and utterly unable to enrich it with a single
Virtue,

Virtue, or one real Perfection. *Pride* and *Dependency*! *Pride* and *Ignorance*! *Pride* and *Vice*! How inconsistent! how absurd! how ridiculous! how provoking! Will not God stain the *Pride* of such *imaginary* Glory? Will he not humble the lofty Looks, mortify the Vanity, and chastise the Insolence of such a Vice?

There is another Vice too common amongst us, which is both the *Growth* and *Parent* of many others; I mean, the Abuse of *Patronage*. In a Treatise on that Subject I proved, beyond Contradiction, that it is a *Trust*, and, consequently, that Patrons are not at Liberty to dispose of their Preferments *arbitrarily*, but are obliged, in Conscience, to have a constant Regard to the *Ends* for which those Endowments were granted, and to the equitable Claims of Merit and Capacity. *Patrons* are Trustees for the *Clergy*, to give them their proper Wages and Reward; they are Trustees for the *People*, to provide them such Pastors as are most able and willing to teach them their Duty; they are Trustees for *Religion*, to nominate such Persons as are most likely to promote it. If, therefore, very large Portions of ecclesiastical Endowments be given to those whose Services in the Church have deserved a much less Share of them, while others who have merited more are but meanly provided for, here is a Misapplication of publick Money, and Injustice done to those whose Labours entitle them to it. If at any Time a Person should be promoted to a Preferment, not because he was fitted for it, but because the Preferment was fit for him, the *People* who are to be instructed by him must be great Sufferers in their religious Concerns, and the Interest of *Religion* must suffer with them. The Abuse of this very important Trust is of a complicated Nature, the Guilt of it proportionably

tionably aggravated, and the Consequences of it highly pernicious in many Respects. I could say a great many severe Things on this Head, which I would defy all the Wit of Man to gain-say, but I have suggested Hints sufficient to put *conscientious* Persons upon thinking of it in a very serious Way. The Commonness of a Practice may lessen People's Abhorrence of it, and the Number of Offenders may serve to keep one another in Countenance; but neither *Practice*, nor *Numbers*, nor *Characters*, *nothing* can alter *the Nature of Things*. I am fully convinced that the Abuse of this Trust has been one of the *grand* Causes of the Decay of Religion, and that a conscientious Discharge of it would be one of the most likely of all natural Means of recovering it. I shall add no more than this, *viz.* that at the great Tribunal at the last Day all Patrons will be asked some Questions which many of them will not be able to answer, in any other Way than by Silence and Confusion.

But there is a Vice behind, more flagrant, more provoking and daring than any that I have mentioned, which, I fear, is not so uncommon as it is heinous. *Every* Vice is an act of Disobedience to the Authority, and injurious to the Honour of God. The neglect of *Prayer*, especially of *publick* Worship, is refusing to make an Acknowledgement of his *Providence*, and is tempting him to leave us destitute of his Protection and Blessing. An *actual* Denial of his Existence and Government is a kind of voluntary *Outlawry*; but to acknowledge his *Being*, and bid open Defiance to his *Power*, this is an Insult that not only *deserves*, but *demand*s Correction, and *challenges* God to make bare his Arm and send the audacious Rebel into the next World to repent in Chains of Darkness.

Darkness. Of this outrageous Nature is the Sin of *Perjury*; and of the *commonness* of this outrageous Vice our *Places* and *Offices*, not to say our Courts of *Justice*, are a standing Witness. I my self often hear People talk of taking an Oath, as of a Matter of *Form*, and of an *indifferent* Nature; and I am well informed, that it is become a customary thing with Persons to take an Oath, not only without due Seriousness, but even in a *ludicrous* manner, as if it were a Trifle below a grave Reflection. And, considering the heedless Temper of Mankind, the frequency of Oaths, and the slovenly manner of administering them, it is the less to be wondered at that Men should lose that Awe with which such a solemn act of Religion would naturally strike their Minds. I make no scruple to declare that this is a Scandal to our Constitution, and the greatest Injury to the publick Welfare. For what can be more irreligious than to lessen the Reverence of Oaths? Or what can be more injurious to the Society than to destroy their grand Security for all the Blessings of it? One can hardly tell which to wonder at most in *modern Policy*, the *Wickedness*, or the *Folly* of it. Great Pains have been taken to weaken the Influence of *Oaths* by ruining *Religion*, and yet at the same time they have been *multiplying* them while they do every thing that may render them *insignificant*. But there is one thing *more* to be admired than even their egregious *Wickedness*, or *Folly*; I mean, the *Goodness* of God, not only in bearing so much with such daring Impiety, but in restraining the Licentious, who have no Restraints from Conscience, but many Temptations from Nature and Condition, often to swear their fellow Subjects out of their *Fortunes*, their *Lives*, or *Liberties*. To this over-ruling Power is it owing, that, when *Bribery* and *Subornation* of

of Evidence are so much practised, and there is such a general Inclination to *receive* Bribes, the Consequences are not more fatal. I hope the Legislature, for the Honour of their Maker, out of regard to the Good of the Publick, and their own Safety, will consider how to recover to Oaths their due Reverence and Force. Indeed, all other Methods must be ineffectual unless Men have a just and awful Sense of God; but the making this Appeal to him so very common and familiar necessarily tends to weaken the solemnity of it. Besides, taking *unnecessary* Oaths is *vain* Swearing; and all Oaths are unnecessary where the Ends of Society may be answered without them. And that this is the Case, will appear from what I have observed concerning the necessary Effects of *Familiarity*. For, if this renders them cheap, their Force in general being weakened, the Society will lose more in Matters of great Weight than it can gain in lesser ones.

The next and last Article that I shall mention, tho' it be not in its Nature so exceeding sinful, nor in its Consequences so fatal, is, however, very criminal, argues a very great Want of Religion, and makes all the other Vices the more dangerous, because it makes a Reformation the more difficult; I mean, a general *Unconcernedness* about these Things; for unless Men have such a Feeling and warm Sense of them as to have their Indignation raised and their Fears awakened, it is impossible that they should exert themselves in their several Capacities with proper Vigour. But what Signs do we see in their Behaviour and Conduct of their being thus inwardly affected? We know in what Manner the Passions of Anger and Hatred express themselves, by Looks and Words in other Instances; and if they were heartily incensed against

gainst Vice, and had a just Hatred of it, those Passions would appear in the same Manner upon that Occasion. If Men have any other Interest at Heart we know with what Industry and Earnestness, with what Courage and Perseverance they will pursue it; and the same hearty Concern for the Interest of *Religion* and *Virtue* would produce as great Activity and Resolution in promoting them. We know how tender Men are of the Reputation of an earthly Friend, or Benefactor; how quick to resent, how forward to revenge any Injury done to it; and should not their Concern for the Honour of their *Creator* and *Redeemer* be proportionably greater, as he is so much kinder to us than it is possible for us to be to one another? But is this commonly the Case? Or, rather, do we not usually see the very reverse of it? When a Man hears another swear and curse, does he seem so much affected? Is he equally ready to do Justice upon the Offender for so great an Indignity offered to God? Nay, does he seem to take Notice of it at all, with any Grief, or Indignation? And, as to any Attempt towards getting him punished, it is so unusual a Thing, that the very *Singularity* of it renders any Information disreputable. Does any *other* Vice occasion a just Grief and Resentment? On the contrary, as far as I have seen of Mankind, they are, most of them, perfectly indifferent and unmoved. If they do express any Dislike, it is with the greatest Coldness. If they make any Attempt towards suppressing it, they do it with the greatest Indolence; are soon tired, soon discouraged by the Appearance of Trouble, of Difficulty, of Danger, or Expence. As to the *Consequence* of the Prevalency of Impiety and Irreligion upon the Welfare of the Society, either from their natural Tendency, or from the
Judgments

Judgments of *Heaven*, few seem to be affected with any Apprehensions of that Kind. They are as insensible of its *pernicious*, as are they of its *odious* Nature.

And, now, this being a true Account of the *general* Disposition of the Nation, of some of the best Part of it, (for many are professed Friends to Vice, and Enemies to Virtue; very industrious to discountenance the one, and propagate the other) what a melancholy Prospect does it afford to a considering Person? What Reason have we to expect that God will give himself any Concern for the Safety and Welfare of a Nation who are so unconcerned for his Honour? Nay, what Reason have we not to fear that he will make an Example of such Hypocrites, who pretend to have a Sense of Religion while they do little or nothing to shew it? And our Danger, as I observed, is the greater because there is hardly a possibility, in the ordinary Course of things, but that we shall grow worse and worse for want of the common Means of Reformation. The poorer sort of People are so illiterate that it is difficult to give them any Notion of Religion; the generality of the fashionable Class are as much *above* it, as the others are *below* it. The former are almost *incapable*, and the latter are as *impatient* of any Advice, or Improvement, and take care to prevent such Uneasiness by keeping out of the way of it. What little Religion remains in the Nation lies in the middle Region, but it is very much impaired by its Communication with two such infectious Borderers. If their Principles, as to the great Articles of Faith, be not corrupted, they have given themselves very little trouble to enquire into the *Grounds* of their Belief; if they keep clear of *gross* Immoralities, they are at a much greater Distance from *Christian Perfection*.
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It is, in short, rather a *negative* Religion, than any thing real and substantial; an *Abstinence from Evil*, without *learning to do well*. And if we make it necessary for God to visit us for our Sins, our Visitation will be the heavier, because our Sins are greatly aggravated by reason of the singular Advantages and the extraordinary Means of Improvement with which God has blessed this Nation. If Men be ignorant *here*, it is under the greatest Light that any People in the World enjoy; the Word of God in every one's Hands; the best helps towards understanding it; and the greatest variety of the most excellent Books written in Explanation of the Doctrines and Duties of *Christianity*. If they be without the Assistance of God's Grace to enlighten their Minds and mend their Hearts, it is under all the Means that can be had; our Religion professed in its greatest Purity, and the Sacraments duly administered.

Thus I have taken Notice of some of the most notorious and provoking of our National Vices. God knows, I could have made the Catalogue much longer, but the Reckoning, as I have stated it, is heavy and black enough to awaken our Fears. Compare our publick Condition with the State of those Nations who have been chastised by the avenging Hand of God, and then tell me whether we have not too much Reason to expect the same Fate. If any one be disposed to differ with me, let him, if he can, disprove any of the Propositions that I have laid down, concerning God's *moral Attributes*, the *History of his providential Dispensations*, the *State of the Nation*, or the *Conclusion drawn from them*. As for the *Existence* of a God, I defy all the Infidels to account for their *own* Existence without supposing a *first Cause*. An *eternal* Succession of *finite* Beings is a Contradiction in Terms. It is asserting that there is something *Eternal*, something which *never had any Beginning*, and yet that there never

was any thing but what *had* a Beginning.—The Existence of a *first Cause* being proved, his *Attributes* are easily deduc'd. For the Truth of the *Scriptures*, I refer them to the four Marks in Mr. *Lesly's Short Method with the Deists*, which have never yet been answered by them, nor ever will —That a Being, *immutable* in his Nature, should act *invariably* after the same manner in the same Circumstances, must be acknowledged to be a *moral Necessity*.—That there is too great a *Similitude* of Circumstances, no one who has read his *Bible* and knows any thing of the World, can deny. The *Conclusion*, therefore, may be very safely left to shift for its self.

When I speak of the corrupt State of the Nation I do not mean to assert that there are not many particular Instances of *warm* and *active* Piety in it, but those Instances will not disprove my *general* Account, or destroy the Use that I make of it.

It may be objected that other Parts of *Christendom* are in a more depraved Condition than we are. Be it so. What then? This only shews that they are the more likely to fit themselves for a *total Destruction*, but not that we are the less likely to be *severely corrected*.

I am inclined, for Reasons which I assigned in my Sermon * before the Commons last 29th of *May*, to hope that God, in Mercy, will not suffer us to go on and fill up the Measure of our Iniquities, and therefore since we are beyond the reach of *ordinary* Means to reclaim us, there is the more Reason to think that kind Providence, like a good Father, will give us some proper Corrections to awaken and soften us. However, as we know not the Time of his Visitations, it is our Business to endeavour to appease the

the Divine Wrath, to try to avert those impending Judgments which hang over our Heads, and obtain the Divine Protection which is necessary to the Safety of all States. And, therefore, I shall conclude with telling you what I apprehend to be your Duty on this Occasion.

If I were speaking to *Gentlemen* of large Fortunes and extensive Influence, I would advise them to make use of all the Advantages of their Situation to restrain Vice and promote Virtue, to countenance all good Undertakings, and assist those who have Honesty and Zeal enough to engage in them; to be Examples of *Integrity* and *Piety* to their Inferiors; to keep up a Sense of *Religion* in their *Families*, which cannot fail of spreading itself, not only among their *Children* and *Servants*, but among their *Tenants* and *Neighbours*; particularly to be constant in their Attendance upon *publick Worship*, which is the great Means of *Religion*, and the most likely Way to procure the Blessing of *Providence* upon the Community.

If I were addressing myself to any in the *Magistracy*, I would exhort them to use their *Authority* as well as their *Credit*, for the Service of *Religion* and *Virtue*, for by such a Behaviour they will act as becomes their Station. Whoever promotes Religion and Virtue, and checks Vice most, will execute his Commission the most faithfully: And, however the Indolent and the Timorous may flatter their Consciences into a false Peace, they must be answerable for all the Good that by their Vigilance and Activity they might have done, and for all the Evil that they might have prevented.

But, though *you*, my Brethren, are not clothed with Civil Power, you have, all, some Influence in your Families, and in your Neighbourhood. In your Families, you have some Authority over your
Children

Children and Servants ; among your Neighbours and Acquaintance, you have the Influence of your Interest and Credit. The former you can command ; the latter you can prudently reprove and advise : And every one, let his Station be what it will, is oblig'd to use all possible Means, in his Power, to promote Piety and Virtue, and the Happiness of his Brother. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour*, and not suffer Sin upon him ; this Precept is not restrained to the Clergy, but extends itself to all Mankind. The Law of *Charity* binds it upon you. If you saw any one in Danger of falling into a Pit, or down a Precipice, would you not endeavour to prevent his Ruin ? Much more ought you to endeavour to prevent his *eternal Destruction*. Every one prays, that *God's Will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*, and is not every one bound to do every Thing in his Power towards the Success of his Prayers ? The Laws of *Society* lay a farther Obligation upon you to use your utmost Endeavours to promote Religion and Virtue, as necessary to social Happiness ; and the present Times call for all your Industry, Prudence and Vigour. The Kingdom is very wicked. Cities and large Towns are the most corrupted. In this Place, I am sure, there is much Vice, among the lower Sort, and many Disorders ; and much might be done towards restraining and regulating them, if those of the best Understanding and most Weight among you, would enter into concerted Measures, and heartily join in putting them in Execution. I must deal plainly with you, and tell you, that the Reason why you do not set about it is, because you have not a quick and tender Sense of your Duty. If you had but half as much Zeal for the Honour of God, and the Interest of Religion, as you have for your own Credit and Interest ; if you were half as intent upon serving your Maker, to whom you owe every Thing, as you are to get Money, you would

would try all possible Means to prevent the infamous Prophanation of the Sabbath in this Town, and rectify other Irregularities, that are not only a Reproach to a *Christian*, but a Scandal to any *Civil Society*. I have assured many of you, that I am ready to concur with you; but an Attempt of that Nature, without your Assistance, would be attended with no other Effect than the Loss of that Esteem and Affection, which alone can give me any Influence among you. For my *own* Sake, I should be loth to lose them, because they are my Comfort and my Glory. For *your* Sakes, likewise, I am very desirous to preserve them, as they give me the more Power to do you good. But while I am labouring to persuade you to reform *others*, I must remind you that the Reformation must begin, where *Charity* always begins, and too often ends, at *Home*. If you mean to prevent the Prophanation of the *Sabbath*, you must keep it *your selves*. If you mean to persuade others to be constant *at Church*, you must set the Example, as well as give Advice. If you mean, with any Success, to regulate *disorderly Houses*, they will expect to see Temperance and good Order in your own Houses and Behaviour.

My Brethren, I have now discharged my own Conscience in telling you your Duty. If you will still remain idle and unconcerned for the Honour of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Good of your Neighbours, *your Blood will be on your own Heads, see ye to it.*

Before I conclude, I must direct myself to those whose Circumstances may not, perhaps, give them much Influence over others. I must inform them, that they may do something towards averting God's Judgments, by reforming their *own Families* and *themselves*, which can hardly fail of having some Effect upon their Acquaintance; however, it will give them an *Interest* with the *Almighty*.

mightly. The lowest *Artificer*, the *Farmer*, the *Day-labourer*, any one may be just, and temperate, and honest, and pious. Even the *Beggar*, tho' clothed in Rags, can have his Mind adorned with the *Robes of Righteousness*. He can send up his Prayers for his Country with as much Faith and Ardency as the greatest Monarch, and his Prayers will as soon be accepted at the Throne of Heaven. By thus uniting together in a good Life, and a constant Course of Devotions, we shall have a *standing Force* much more impenetrable than the closest *Pbalanx*, much more powerful than Fleets and Armies, and all the Implements of War. We shall then make *Omnipotence* our Friend; and *who can thunder with a Voice like his?* If God be for us, *who can be against us?* If this Nation were, all, *truly Christian, strictly pious and virtuous*, I should be under no Apprehensions from a Junction of all the Powers on Earth against us. I would take up the Consolation of the Prophet, " Say ye not a *Confederacy*, to all
 " them to whom this People shall say a *Confederacy*;
 " racy; neither fear ye their Fear, nor be afraid.
 " Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let
 " *Him* be your Fear, and let *Him* be your Dread.
 " Trust ye in the LORD for ever, for in the
 " LORD J E H O V A H I S E V E R L A S T I N G
 " S T R E N G T H. **18 JA 53**

*To Him be ascribed all Honour, Might,
 Majesty, and Dominion.*

F I N I S.

